

BR
526
.M56
1929

Edith Page

AMERICANISM
AND
CHRISTIANITY

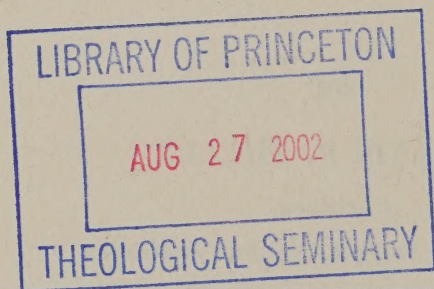
by

FRANCIS P. MILLER

Chairman,

The World's Student Christian Federation

*Addresses delivered before the
National Assembly of Student
Secretaries at Estes Park, Colo-
rado, July, 1929, and published
by request.*



BR 526 .M56 1929
Miller, Francis Pickens,
1895-1978.
Americanism and Christianit

Copies of this booklet may be obtained from the Student
Division, National Council of Young Men's Christian
Associations, 347 Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Contents

I

THE AMERICAN INVASION OF THE WORLD

Page 5

II

SOME CONSEQUENCES OF OUR NEW INDUSTRIALISM

Page 10

III

AN ALTERNATIVE THEORY OF LIFE

Page 17

IV

THE MEANING OF THE FEDERATION

Page 26

THE AMERICAN INVASION OF THE WORLD

LESS than fifty years ago the contacts of the United States with the rest of the world were few in number and simple in character. Economically America's chief international interest was the export of foodstuffs; culturally it was attendance at a German university as the ideal finishing school for a professor's chair; religiously it was the missionary enterprise to the non-European world.

The character of our role in the community of nations has changed so suddenly during the past two or three decades that few of us are yet conscious of the extent to which that change represents not only a revolution in the life of the United States but in the life of the world as a whole.

So far as international relations are concerned, the most significant development since the conclusion of the World War is the economic invasion of the world by the United States. After spending a century in creating and supplying the internal markets of this continent, it began to be evident about 1900 that if the prosperity resulting from this activity was to be maintained it would be necessary to extend to other continents the energies which had been devoted to this one. The vast machine of production which had been created could not be kept going without the continual extension into new areas of the search for raw materials to serve as fuel and for markets to absorb its products. The maintenance of our extraordinarily high standard of living depends upon continual expansion. If this commercial and industrial expansion should slow down or cease the machine would immediately follow suit and our standard of living would fall.

The extent to which this American invasion of the world has progressed during the last quarter of a century may be seen by an examination of our trade returns. We are no longer an agricultural nation; we have become a manufacturing nation. In 1928 the United States actually imported 200 million dollars worth more of foodstuffs than were exported. Toward the end of the last century only twenty per cent of our exports were manufactured goods. Now fifty per cent of our exports are manufactured goods and these are worth more than two and a half billion dollars, or seven times what such exports were worth a quarter of a century ago.

Meanwhile our merchant marine has increased in almost exactly the same ratio as the export of manufactured goods. There follows inevitably the demand for cruisers to guarantee the internationalization of the high seas in case some other nation in time of war should attempt to interfere with our trade or close the trade routes to our ships. The logical keystone

to our commercial development has been contributed by Mr. Hoover who says that the government's function is to "chart the channels of foreign trade and keep them open." It is perhaps one of the great ironies of history that a Quaker thus supplies the United States with the philosophy and technique upon which to build its world-wide economic empire. Our empire of economic interests may seem somewhat intangible when compared with the territorial empire of the British, but our power over the destinies of other peoples will prove to be just as tangible as the power of a land empire ever was.

While the World War did not cause the economic out-thrust of the United States to other continents, it played a very important role in speeding up that out-thrust and also in giving to the United States an internal unity which has made so impressive her post-war impact on the rest of the world. The war welded the United States into a self-conscious nation, or rather into a self-conscious continent. The days of the sovereign nation were passed, the days of the sovereign continent had come.

For the first time in its history the United States has faced the rest of the world since the war as one gigantic pulsating united social organism. This is probably the most significant fact in the life of the modern world. Heretofore groups which have been acutely conscious of an inner unity and of an outer mission to the rest of the world have been limited, usually, to relatively small geographical areas, sections of a continent with strictly limited natural resources, such as France or Germany. But, scattered over an immense territory on this continent, are nearly a hundred and twenty million persons who are rapidly becoming as self-conscious of the fact that they are Americans as the inhabitants of France have ever been that they are French.

This vast social organism is much more extensive and more numerous than any previously existing nation state; it has also developed along lines which make its capacity for united mass action more immediate and volcanic than has ever been true of national groups in Europe. Our ideal of universal public education is one of the characteristics of this country of which we are justly proud. But like many ideals its realization means that man's capacity for action has been increased; his capacity for evil action as well as for good action. The diffusion of knowledge which has resulted from our system of universal education manifestly has contributed to the welfare of the community and to the happiness of the individual. But also it has exposed the individual and the community to subtle and violent attacks of falsehood and prejudice, veiled as an appeal to patriotism and the protection of national interests. Universal education has made us self-conscious as a nation; universal education has also made us, as a nation, the facile prey of well-organized propaganda. As this stage of our national development the individual is helpless before such propaganda. Those of us who remember 1917 will remember how in the briefest period of time it was possible to convert a peace-loving nation lacking in internal unity into a unified and

passionately war-mad mass of citizens. The instruments for accomplishing an end of this kind have been brought, since 1917, to a high degree of perfection. The radio, the "chain-movie" and the "chain-press" are a trinity which in times of national crisis can exert what amounts to superhuman power over the destinies of the community; superhuman in the sense that when certain currents of ideas and emotions are released by the united intention of these agencies, forces can be set in motion which in a short time get beyond all human power either of direction or control.

Universal education has given us a consciousness of national unity; but it is the industrial machine which has provided the steel skeleton over which the social organism has grown. It is not an inspiring concept, this picture of a steel skeleton as the basis of our national unity. Perhaps it is a mold rather than a skeleton, and the time may come when this particular mold will have served its day as a supporting frame for our national existence and will be replaced by a framework of ideas or of culture as the form which will give meaning to American life. Whatever the future may have in store for us the fact remains that the national framework at the moment is a framework of production and merchandising. It is the machine of American industry and commerce which gives us national cohesion. The system and the technique which that machine has called into being are the most dynamic forces in our national life. Far more than any of us are aware these forces are changing our mentality as individuals and our customs as a society.

The most significant change is that which may be observed in the relations between the individual and society. Group life is increasing in importance while the individual is diminishing in importance. The individual gradually is being absorbed by the collectivity; in other words, society is being regimented by the necessities of production.

Such in brief, is the picture of the United States seen by the nations which feel the full impact of her economic invasion. A nation of an entirely new type, new because of the extent of her internal market and the thoroughness of her industrial rationalization; a nation extremely susceptible to propaganda because of universal education; a nation regimented by the machine; a nation suddenly waking to a consciousness of a world destiny at the very moment when she is showing great reluctance to cooperate politically in the society of nations. Is it little wonder that in Europe the fear of America is growing, or that responsible persons use such phrases as "our impending vassalage to America" or "the American colonization of Europe?"

The extent and consequence of America's economic invasion of the world is vividly illustrated by the impact of the United States on Europe during the decade since the war. It is a commonplace to speak of the profound and disquieting revolution in life produced by the impact of the West, including America, on the civilizations of the Orient. The consequence of America's impact on Europe, however, is in some ways more striking even than the

consequence of her influence in the East; more striking because Europe is the last of the continents to be exposed to American influence. Until a decade or so ago the formative tides of civilization were always flowing out from Europe. This is no longer the case. Tides do continue to flow out from Europe, but they are met by equally strong tides flowing back towards Europe from America. The currents are no longer all one way. Powerful cross-currents have set in.

The European finds himself exposed to countless new forces which are of extra-European origin. Most of these forces originate in the United States. When the last penny of the billions of war reparation has been paid only a small percentage of the total will have remained in Europe. The bulk will have been passed on by France and Great Britain to pay their war debts to the United States. There is no department of the European's life which is not affected by forces originating in America. A judge in a western city writes a book on companionate marriage and it becomes a best-seller in Germany, with far-reaching consequences for the moral life of that country. A manufacturer of electrical washing machines in the middle west discovers that the continent of Europe can become one of his best markets. Perhaps three-fourths of the films shown in Europe since 1920 are of Hollywood manufacture. American beauty-shops and American bars decorate the boulevards of every European capital, while the cocktail has been our most significant contribution to the manners of high society in London and Paris.

Profound changes are taking place in European industrial organization, because of the United States. On the one hand is the desire to benefit by our experience both in the technique of manufacture and in the distribution of commodities; on the other hand is the necessity to compete with the United States. It is this second factor which is helping the process of rationalization of industry and contributing toward the growing interest in some sort of European economic federation. Such a federation would offer the double advantage of an internal market equal to the internal market of the United States and the possibility of collective measures against American competition if such became necessary.

The reaction of Europeans to America's economic and financial invasion is by no means entirely negative. There are, on the contrary, a great many, particularly among the younger industrialists, who heartily welcome it. They feel that the application of American methods will contribute materially toward an era of European prosperity. They are glad to discover a mental attitude and technique which will act as a powerful solvent upon the antiquated traditions which still dominate many industries. They see in the American way of doing things more flexibility for organizational adjustment and greater opportunity for the reward of personal merit.

However, this enthusiasm is confined largely to manufacturing and commercial circles. Among intellectual and religious groups one more frequently

finds profound misgiving. Those who care for Europe's culture and Europe's Christianity find their situation made more desperate by the arrival of America on the scene. The principal consequence of American influence is to speed up the process of subordinating the whole of life to the ends of industrial production. That has not been the European traditional ideal. It is an ideal which European religious leaders think cannot be reconciled with the Christian faith as they understand it. The consequent rapid trend toward secularism which is everywhere apparent and which has its source in Europe as well as outside of Europe, has become identified in their minds with America's impact on Europe. When they think of secularism they call it Americanism.

One has only to remember European history to realize the revolution in European thought that is made necessary by the arrival in Europe of these influences from the strongest nation which now exists in the world outside of Europe. The history of Europe has been the history of an attempt to preserve a certain type of life against the successive attempts of outside groups to destroy it. Whether the Europeans will ever come to think of us as they once thought of the Turks or of the Saracens will be determined by the character of the interflow of life across the Atlantic during the next half century.

No greater responsibility ever rested upon a group of people than that which now rests upon the Christian community in America. We are citizens of a nation which in one generation has become the most powerful state in the world. The American economic invasion of the world carries with it infinite possibilities for good or evil to all other nations. How is our country going to use this enormous power? Will we use it to shape the destinies of other nations to suit our own ends? Or are we going to show ourselves, as a nation, capable of thinking of the interests of other nations as well as of our own interests? The issues of peace or war are involved in the answers to these questions. It is our business as Christians to understand the facts and to throw the weight of our influence into the balance in order that national egoism may be restrained and that a positive will toward justice and fair play may pervade the private as well as the official relations between the United States and other nations. We have all helped to make this civilization. Will it be a civilization which is unresponsive to every other appeal except the necessities of the machine? Or, will it be a civilization which from time to time will prove responsive to the mind and spirit of Jesus Christ?

SOME CONSEQUENCES OF OUR NEW INDUSTRIALISM

THE American economic invasion of the world is the consequence of the appearance of a new type of civilization in the United States. The foundation of this new society is the rationalization of industry. Its appearance constitutes nothing less than a major social revolution in our national life, a revolution which not only affects radically the character of individual and social life on this continent but which also acts powerfully upon the cultures and peoples exposed to the impact of our economic invasion.

As Christians we are concerned with both these consequences of our new industrial civilization. We are concerned with its consequences for our life as American citizens. We are also concerned with its consequences in the life of other nations. What are some of the more important issues that are raised for us as American citizens?

First of all there is the question of the integrity of the individual. I think it is quite apparent that the real crisis of our day is the crisis of the individual. The changing conditions of life are setting narrower and narrower bounds to the individual's activity and thought. The possible alternatives before any one of us are fewer than they were and will continue to decrease. Choice becomes more and more restricted. But it is not the "robot" servant of the machine who suffers most from the new society. It is the consumer more than the producer who is most radically affected by the new order of things. It is the consumer who tends to become the pure "marionnette"—moved by forces outside himself which determine for him his tastes, his interests and even his thoughts. That is the supreme danger for modern man. Of course there always will be a few rare individuals who refuse to capitulate before these external pressures and whose life is not dependent upon the forces which dominate contemporary society. But the dream of a democracy of intelligent and free men is vanishing rapidly before the rigid order imposed from without by the requirements of production.

I do not believe that we will ever be able to function effectively as Christians until we shall have acquired a more realistic sense of the present situation. Jesus' own faith was held in the face of a world of which it was true that "narrow is the gate and straightened the way that leadeth into life and few there be that find it." The actual fact is that for most of us the gate is very narrow and the way very straightened. The limitations with which this external system of production surrounds us are so great that we

will remain utterly impotent unless we have a clear appreciation of their exact nature. It is only when we begin to recognize with Sorel "that the way of deliverance is narrowly conditioned" that we will be competent either to achieve deliverance for ourselves or to help others to find the way out.

The second issue to which I will refer is closely related to the integrity of the individual. It is the issue of personal and public freedom. The battles for freedom which were won in the political field during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are now being steadily lost in the economic field. Gastonia is a replica of Lexington but it will not have similar consequences. The control of life is gradually passing from the representative elected assemblies to gigantic industrial and financial groupings thoroughly impersonal in their relation to the community but all-powerful in determining the character of the environment in which the individual lives and the limits of his reaction to it. The decisions of Congress are as a rule made *after* the event. They have already been made elsewhere by non-representative industrial and financial organizations.

The executive branch of government tends more and more to become the agency through which these non-political controlling groups function. And they in turn have also proved a useful instrument in accomplishing the purposes of the executive when its way was blocked by Congress. John Hays once said that thirty-four per cent of the Senate would always be found on the blackguard side of every important treaty. This has proved to be a fairly accurate prophecy and the President has been forced to devise alternative means for taking necessary steps in our relations with other countries. The rejection by the Senate of the Treaty of Versailles may prove to be one of the most important turning points in our constitutional development. Since then the President has found it possibly to rely more and more upon administrative procedure and upon the private diplomatic activity of representatives of our commercial and financial interests to accomplish ends that normally would be initiated and decided upon by Congress. It becomes increasingly difficult for the electors, through their representatives, to share in any significant way in the direction of policy. The democratic form of government as practiced in the United States is failing to maintain a government "of the people, by the people and for the people." The control which has passed out of the hands of their elected representatives will become a repressive and tyrannical power unless it is recaptured and subordinated to the interests of the entire community. This process of reestablishing the principle of government in the interests of all sections of the community and of recovering a larger measure of freedom of speech and action for the individual will probably involve radical adjustments in our Constitution and in our present form of government. Why not work toward a constitutional convention in our lifetime?

One aspect of the present situation which concerns us directly, is the

relation of the Christian individual in his capacity as a citizen to the kind of state which the new society is building. The idea of the sovereign state is one which most of the civilized nations abandoned in its pure form when they became associated with the League of Nations. Participation in the League of Nations and particularly acceptance of the optional clause relating to the Permanent Court of International Justice is a specific surrender of certain aspects of national sovereignty. However, this concept seems to have acquired new vitality in this country at the very moment when it is being discarded in other parts of the world. Secretary of State Kellogg told the Alliance for the Promotion of International Friendship Through the Churches last winter that he did not believe the United States would ever consent to an international tribunal determining which was the aggressor nation. Senator Borah, that stalwart "anti" and theoretical champion of a warless world, reveals himself as an ultra-nationalist whenever he is faced with the practical issue of whether the Senate or some international body is to have the last word in a controversy. It is evident that the dominant political theory in this country continues to be that the state is absolutely sovereign. That theory is not dangerous when the state which holds it exists on an isolated agricultural continent. But when the government of the most powerful commercial state in the world interprets the function of government to be that of serving as the hand-maid of private commercial enterprises engaged in foreign trade this theory becomes a menace not only to world peace but to the conscience of the individual.

It is only in recent years that the American state has become alive to the consequences of its claim to absolute sovereignty over the lives of its citizens. The World War furnished it with an opportunity for the full exercise of its sovereignty and the growing consciousness of the dependence of our standard of living upon the extension and protection of our foreign trade has stimulated the state to continue to assert this sovereignty and to prepare for its even more effective exercise in future defensive wars. This preparation involves the regimentation of its citizens into a loyal mass which readily can be conscripted and the elimination or exclusion from that mass of all persons whose conformity seems doubtful.

It is increasingly difficult for the individual to distinguish between the things of Caesar and the things of God because Caesar insists that the worship of any gods which are not national deities is equivalent to defiance of his sovereignty. In the decision of the Supreme Court in the case of *Rozika Schwimmer*, the court, in denying her application for citizenship, expressed the opinion that "the fact that she is an uncompromising pacifist with no sense of nationalism but only a cosmic sense of belonging to the human family justifies belief that she may be opposed to the use of military force as contemplated by our constitution and laws." It was for almost identical reasons

that Jesus was executed and that the early Christian martyrs were thrown to the wild beasts in the arena.

The most disturbing element in this situation is that the churches are not exerting any counter-pressure on the state. On the contrary, because of their zeal to foster temperance by coercive legal force rather than by moral persuasion, the churches in many instances have surrendered their spiritual integrity to the state and have offered to become the tool of the state in the assertion of its sovereignty over the conscience of the individual. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church recently prepared an official message on law enforcement in the course of which one reads: "While it [the Church] ought at all times to give the government its moral support, that duty instantly becomes more peremptory and exacting in a time of crisis." Great as were the weaknesses of the Roman Church during the medieval period, not in the days of its deepest degradation did it ever stoop to the admission of such a servile relation to the state as this statement represents. The principle which the General Assembly has enunciated is fraught with momentous consequences. It means that in times of national crisis the members of the Presbyterian Church who are trying to preserve the liberty of their own conscience can expect no reinforcement from their own church but will be exposed to the hostile and coercive attitude of their church in case their conscience leads them to a decision contrary to the decision of the state.

The issue thus raised is fundamental. Has or has not the Christian individual an existence outside of the sovereign state? Recognizing the enormous obligation which each one of us owes to the state for the part it has played in making our lives possible, I am nevertheless certain, for my own part, that in the last resort it is the conscience of the Christian individual and not the decree of the state which must be decisive. In other words, the Christian individual must preserve his right to an ultimate veto over the state. He will only wish to use this veto after every other positive alternative has failed; he will do so with a clear recognition of the seriousness of his action and he will be prepared to take the consequences. But he must at all cost preserve, over every earthly allegiance, the sense of the priority of his allegiance to his God and to the commonwealth of the men of Christ.

These are some of the issues raised by the impact of this new type of industrial civilization upon us as citizens of the United States. Other issues are also being raised by the economic impact of the United States upon other peoples. The significant point for us, as citizens of the United States, is that our unwillingness to adhere to the League of Nations means that the activities of our industrialists abroad are not subject to investigation by any international body. The activities of the British, French and Dutch rubber interests in the Far East were investigated recently by a representative of the International Labor Office. But, along with Russia, the United States

occupies an entirely unique position in the world. The International Labor Office dares not incur the risk of offending the Senate by taking notice of what Americans are doing in their economic invasion of the world!

It is high time for us as Christians to become aware of the chasm that separates the ethics of Jesus from the dominant motives which direct modern civilization. This rationalized industrial society represents a perfectly straightforward view of life. It believes that the chief end of man is economic production and that the interests of the individual are subordinate to that all-important end. The requirements of the machine are primary; the spiritual needs of the individual are secondary. The maintenance and further elevation of the standard of living constitutes the final touchstone of conduct. "By their fruits ye shall know them," and "fruits" means increasing prosperity.

Concern for the community's standard of living is an essential by-product of the good life, but it is only a by-product, and not even that unless the idea of *community* includes the world. If the concern is solely for *our* standard of living it will result in the elevation of our standard at the cost of forcing down the standards of other peoples. The United States tariff laws actually do this at the present time. Our tariff policy is frankly America-centric. It is based upon the assumption that we are going to save ourselves, even if it means letting the other fellow drown. It denies the deepest sporting instincts of our race.

Exclusive preoccupation with national interests during the decade since the war has already done infinite damage to the inner spiritual life of the United States. Unless the forces which profess to believe in the Christian ethic are able to exert a more powerful influence, many of the values which we have prized most highly in our national life will be lost. But the exertion of such an influence depends upon the possession of an adequate alternative theory of life. Have we as members of a movement of Christian students in the United States an alternative to offer to the way of life which this rationalized industrial society has imposed upon us? No alternative will be adequate which does not represent an intellectual theory of life as clearly defined and as concrete as the theory of life which is now dominant. The creation of such a theory must become the preoccupation of our lives. Its creation demands severe self-discipline. Years will be required for its germination and maturity. But even now we can begin to clear the ground and plant the seed.

First of all, we need to ask ourselves what are some of the spiritual and intellectual resources available for this enterprise. What are the most typical responses which religious folk are now making to the needs of life? Probably there never was a time when such responses were more numerous or more varied, but there are a few which seem more popular than the rest and I will mention three: the way of science; enthusiasm for personality; adjustment to the universe.

(1) Each one of us owes an incalculable debt to naturalistic science. Our civilization has been created by the application of its method. For that very reason we cannot look to science for help in forming a critical judgment of our civilization. This is particularly true of applied science. Applied science is interested in the norm (which in a world of persons means the mediocre) whereas we are interested in the best. The most vital and creative life currents always escape the analysis of science. Life is like a train continuously in motion, whereas the scientific description of life is made by a passenger who insists on imagining that the train has stopped at a given station and pictures what he believes would have been seen from that station if the train really had stopped there. The results of the scientific method are sufficient for technical achievement but they do not provide material for an adequate philosophy of life.

Discussing science and religion at the recent annual meeting of the Society of Friends in London, Professor Arthur S. Eddington of Cambridge said: "Probably it is time that recent changes of scientific thought remove some of the obstacles to a reconciliation of religion with science, but this must be carefully distinguished from any proposal that religion be based on scientific discovery. For my own part I am wholly opposed to any such attempt. Briefly the position is this: We have learnt that the exploration of the external world by the methods of physical science leads not to a concrete reality but to a shadow world of symbols, beneath which those methods are unadapted for penetrating. Feeling that there must be more behind, we return to our starting point in human consciousness, the one centre where more might become known. . . . Obviously we cannot trust every whim and fancy of the mind as though it were indisputable revelation; we can and must believe that we have an inner sense of values which guides us as to what is to be heeded." It is upon this inner sense of values that any theory of life must be built which is to be offered as an alternative to the theory dominant in modern society.

(2) Then, there are the enthusiasts for personality. These have become so influential that eminent Christian ministers occasionally adopt their phraseology if not their premises. Even Harry Emerson Fosdick has thought it worth while to employ the concept of personality as the central concept in his popular apologetic for Christianity¹. Said Dr. Fosdick: "Whether one really is a Christian or not depends on whether one accepts or rejects Jesus' attitude toward personality. . . . What if they [the churches] could be made to see that their primary business is the championship of personality!" As an ethical consequence of the Christian faith reverence for personality is central. But as a definition of the Christian faith it is utterly inadequate. What type of personality does Mr. Fosdick believe in championing? That

¹ *Harper's*, April, 1929.

is the all-important question. For "personality" is merely a way of describing man. There is nothing inherent in the concept of "personality" worthy of affording an ideal, much less a way of deliverance for humanity. It is simply man's roseate estimate of himself and it seems highly probable that man as such is a creature far less noble than one may be led to suppose, from his triumph over the forces of nature and his prosperity on this continent. The choice of "personality" as the chief end of human life would mean the capitulation of man before the forces of contemporary civilization. For the content of the concept of "personality" would vary under the play of these forces and gradually would become debased as the community became dominated more and more by technical and secular ideals. It would mean the erection of an idol graven in the image of man—because championship of personality in general leads directly to the championship of one's own type of personality in particular.

There is nothing prophetic in enthusiasm for personality. It would be as acceptable to the Fascists as to the Republicans. The only place where I can imagine it falling a little flat is in the strikers' camp at Gastonia. The enthusiasts for personality fail because they have an insufficient realization of how narrowly the way of deliverance is conditioned.

(3) And finally there are the people whose main interest expresses itself in getting adjusted to the universe. Obsession with self is becoming the great national pastime. Students are brought together in conferences to "understand themselves"; they are encouraged to believe that the most important issues in the universe are slight maladjustments in their own interiors, and they are told that these maladjustments are due to their personal maladjustment to the universe. Given a universe in which a rationalized industrial society is the dominant form of human organization, it is only a moron who could be satisfactorily adjusted to it. In the majority of cases I suspect that personal maladjustment results from being too well adjusted to the universe as it is, rather than from any failure to adjust to it. Creative personality does not result from adjustment to the universe but from adjustment to those elements in the universe which will guarantee its own spiritual integrity. In other words, we must ask adjustment to what universe? And the answer is not to the universe as it is, but to the universe of spiritual values which is not dependent upon the capitalistic system or upon any other system and which, because of its intrinsic worth, will survive long after this civilization has passed away. It is to this universe of spiritual and eternal values that we must turn in our search for an adequate alternative theory of life.

AN ALTERNATIVE THEORY OF LIFE

I SUGGESTED in my preceding address that I did not believe it possible to guarantee the integrity of the individual or to assure personal and public freedom or to secure justice for the peoples who receive the full force of our economic impact, apart from the existence of a group who are working toward a theory of life which may be offered as an alternative to the dominant theory. Such an alternative theory of life must not divert man's interest from this civilization. It must deal realistically with this civilization; at the same time it must be rooted in values which are not dependent upon this civilization and which will remain when this civilization has passed away.

In talking about the factors that ought to be taken into account in working toward an alternative theory of life I do so with hesitancy, because language seems to break down when one approaches nearest to reality or to that of which one is most sure.

I wish to begin with an analogy which seems to throw light on the situation. It is an historical analogy drawn from the Mediterranean World of eighteen hundred years ago. We Americans are the Romans of the modern world. We possess many of the characteristic Roman qualities: we love being executives; we know how to administer; we like to build lines of communication around the world; we believe in bodily hygiene—in other words, we accept and practice a rough and ready pragmatic philosophy of life. Further, our pragmatism leads us, as it led the Romans, to accept rather too readily and without discrimination all the gods that come along in order that we may secure the maximum amount of cooperation from everyone for our administrative schemes. We prefer to worship in a pantheon rather than in a temple to one God.

Illustrations of this tendency may be seen on every hand. I read not long ago a description which someone connected with a student club in New York City had written about the religious policy of that institution. The writer said that the house might be called a House of God for all creeds. That is a perfect illustration of the pantheon principle. It means that one wishes to honor all the gods. It is based on the assumption that all religions are good and that the creeds are supplementary. It represents a denial of the importance of intellectual selection and discrimination. As a matter of fact, a great many forms of religion are very bad indeed and there are creeds which represent diametrically opposite interpretations of life. No one can

worship a god of all the creeds without surrendering his intellectual and ethical self-respect.

Another illustration is even more illuminating as far as the religious thought of this country is concerned. The Church Peace Union has proposed a World's Congress of Religion in the interest of peace. The plans for this congress are supported by ample funds from American sources and several of our prominent denominational leaders appear on the responsible committee. Viewed from the continent of Europe the activities of this committee appear to be the most typical expression of American Protestantism. And yet it requires little reflection to realize that if the representatives of the great world religions who attend the congress are sincere and if they truly reflect the faith of their respective creeds it is pure fantasy to imagine that they can collaborate in any effective way. The only collaboration possible will be on the basis of the least common denominator, and that means a basis so superficial that no creative energy could be expected to issue from it. It is once more the principle of the pantheon—the failure to discriminate between values or between primary and secondary needs. The supreme need in the modern world is not for all the religions to agree upon a sentimental expression of their interest in peace but for some one religion to supply the world with a concept of the catholic world citizen and the catholic world society which will furnish the raw materials out of which an enduring society of nations can be built. That concept will be achieved only by men whose minds are nourished in some one of the great historic faiths.

However, the fact remains that the pantheon is infinitely more popular at the moment than an altar to any one god. Moreover, a great many of the best minds of our generation refuse even to enter the pantheon. They can admit no gods at all. In his brilliant book *A Preface to Morals*, Mr. Walter Lippmann essays to discover some alternative to the gods whose presence he no longer can tolerate. As a matter of fact, the only god with whose character Mr. Lippmann seems to be familiar is an Oriental potentate, and one can heartily sympathize with his sense of dissatisfaction at the rule of this deity. He suggests as an alternative to this inadequate theocracy a religion of the spirit which "has no thesis to defend" and whose "social principle is to live and let live." That seems to me to be a very accurate description of the present state of mind of the intelligentsia of the Democratic party. One had the right to expect more than this from the group of young men whom Woodrow Wilson gathered around him. Ten years have gone by without any clear lead coming from them. One begins to understand why. They have no thesis to defend and they are perfectly willing to live and let live.

This state of mind was also very typical of the Roman world in the second and third centuries. Perhaps the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius may be regarded as the "Book of Morals," to which Mr. Lippmann's book

is the preface. Shortly after the *Meditations* were written, a tremendous thing occurred in the Roman world which introduced the decline and fall. This tremendous thing was nothing less than the gradual loss of nerve among the rulers of the Empire. Many factors contributed to this loss of nerve but it is quite evident that one of the most important causes was the absence of a great central integrating idea at the heart of Roman society. Roman administrative energy gave the Empire cohesion while the Empire was expanding but after the ends of the world had been reached no adequate motive remained—and disintegration began.

That is the price men always pay for the pantheon. It is true that the Christians came into the pantheon and said, "We believe in one God and he is like this." They came with a simple capacity for selection and discrimination, but they came too late to save the Roman Empire. They could do little more than perpetuate in ecclesiastical forms the Roman administrative tradition.

I do not believe that it is yet too late, as far as our civilization is concerned. But that depends entirely upon whether in the next generation or two we can put an adequate integrating idea at the heart of American society. We have no such idea at the moment. It is our administrative urge that still carries us on.

Such an integrating idea will not come from the pantheon. It will appear only in a society where men have chosen their gods and are worshipping them. I believe the present to be a decisive period in our national history. The issue will depend upon whether or not men are willing to choose their gods. Creative activity can come in no other way. You must choose your god. I must choose my god. And when we have chosen, cross fertilization between our concepts is possible. But where men are unwilling to choose, cross-fertilization never takes place and creative activity ceases. The essential thing is that we should choose.

How is one to go about choosing his god? The crucial point for us, as Professor Eddington says, is not the existence of God but the revelation of God. If there is a God who is striving to express more completely his creative energy through forms in the physical universe, one would expect to find physical forms which throw some light upon his character. One would expect to find a trace of his activity not only in one's own experience but in the experience of the race. One would expect to find somewhere a door in the physical world through which one could look out into the world of the spirit and through which one might also enter that other world where eternal values are conserved. One would expect to find in the drama of this world some specific dramatization which gives one a clue and provides one with a key to the meaning of the life of God.

But there is such a welter of experiences and forms that the individual is apt to allow the confusion of his impressions to stultify his ability to dis-

criminate and choose. This is particularly true at a time like the present when the scientific method colors all of our thinking. The important thing is that we should choose the relevant facts out of the unlimited supply of facts that life brings us. And it is just here that the scientific method fails us. That method is absolutely invaluable in providing us with an analysis of the facts and in supplying us with a concise description of their relations in the physical world. It is also invaluable, after we have chosen the relevant facts, in helping us to make effective use of them. But science does not help us at the point of choice. Science supplies us with an inventory of the universe, but it gives no criteria which can guide us in expressing a preference for one article or another. It shows us what some of the problems of human life are, but it does not supply us with insight into the true meaning of those problems.

When one is confronted with the necessity of choice or with the need of insight there is no help for one but what is supplied by one's own consciousness of values. The capacity to discriminate, to choose the relevant facts, depends upon an inner sense of values. This inner sense is much stronger in some persons than in others, but it is only those who possess it who can, with any adequacy, thread their way through the snares of this world. There is in every man a potential capacity of this kind. A sense of values can be developed. It must also be constantly exposed to the correction of experience. We may often be deceived by our trust in it. It is quite possible that what we think is a sense of value is nothing more than a judgment warped by "original sin"—by the cluttered mass of disreputable junk which our social heritage has stored away in every one of us. Limited as it may be, however, this inner sense of values is the sole guide available to any man, and our business is to correct it through experience and to make it more sensitive by use.

This inner sense of values tells us that the most relevant facts in the universe are not those which are susceptible to exact analysis. The most relevant facts are those organic life forces and movements which cannot be catalogued and out of which an inventory cannot be made. These forces escape us the moment we try to capture them; they have already eluded us before we can bring our lens or yardstick to bear upon them.

As persons, the organic life forces which we can understand best and which are most significant for us are those which operate in human beings. In other words, the facts about the universe which are most relevant for us are facts which have been supplied by the lives of individuals.

At this point I do not wish to speak further in general terms, nor do I wish to speak on behalf of the inner sense of values which anyone else here may have. All that one can do is to affirm the choice among the relevant facts of life that his own sense of values has made. I have made my choice. My inner sense of values tells me that the facts supplied by the life of Jesus

are the most relevant facts for me in the universe. These facts furnish me with my "frame of reference." They constitute for me a dramatization of the most significant and creative forces that exist. They give me the essential raw materials I need for my philosophy of life, for my ethics, for my social theory and for my thought about God. They guarantee my integrity as an individual. They assure my freedom against a world which would deny me freedom and they provide me with criteria by which I can distinguish between justice and injustice in social relations.

What are the relevant facts in the life of Jesus? Before attempting to answer this question I wish to remind you that the really relevant facts in Jesus' life cover a much wider range than the facts contained in such phrases as *The Manhood of the Master* or *The Jesus of History*. I suppose most of us are familiar with the books which bear these titles and with the general point of view represented. When I was in college and for some years afterwards that was the interpretation of Jesus' life that played the largest part in my own religious development. I am sure that such books as these have rendered an incalculable service at the point of helping us to understand and appreciate the human qualities of Jesus' life. But I believe the time has come when concentration on the manhood of Jesus has, as far as this Student Movement is concerned, ceased to be a fruitful occupation. Our preoccupation with his manhood has focused our attention and thought on what is little more than a segment of the relevant facts and their total significance. It has focussed our attention on the fragmentary details of his life; on what he said in this situation and on what he did in that. Though all of this is important the full meaning of such isolated incidents cannot be grasped unless visualized against the background of the drama of which they form a part. Jesus as a religious genius is a part of the drama, but not the most important part. If our attention remains focused on the Jesus of history as a religious genius we will no doubt profit by becoming familiar with his life as we might profit by becoming familiar with the life of any great man but we will miss the main significance of the relevant facts which his life supplies.

These facts are contained in a dramatization of life which does not cease with his death; which does not cease until his friends become conscious of his continued existence with them. Such a drama includes facts unknown to the Jesus of history and we will overlook these facts entirely if we limit our interest to the story which concluded with his trial and execution. History has to do with human life. But we are dealing here with forces which cannot be confined within the bounds of biological or psychological existence. The uniqueness of Jesus Christ consists in the fact that it was the quality of his life which aroused in human consciousness for the first time some sense of the true significance and character of these super-biological and super-psychological forces. In Jesus Christ we have a dramatization of the life of God. He is something more than the Jesus of history. He is the dramatization of God in history.

The first relevant fact which I wish to mention is the sense which Jesus had of a personal relation to a personal being outside of himself whom he called Father. This being whom Jesus called Father was not a projection of his own *ego*, nor was he identified with the values rising out of the common life of Jesus and his disciples. It is common at the present time to describe God in terms of personality. I suggest that this is an inadequate description of the God to whom Jesus prayed. Personality is a concept usually applied to individual men and women. It is a thoroughly human concept. Do you know of any personality which does not contain a mixture of both good and evil as a part of its very nature? But Jesus asserted that God and God alone was good. There was no mixture of good and evil in him. The God whom Jesus worshipped was a holy God. He was not a God of this world; he could not be identified with the interests or forces of this world. But however absolutely he might be thought of as separate from this world, he was at the same time so intimately involved in the destiny of men that he shared with them completely in the tragedy as well as in the triumph of their existence.

And this leads to another relevant fact about the universe that becomes apparent as we study the life of Jesus. This is the tension that exists between the world as it is and the God whom Jesus called Father. We see in Jesus' life and death the actualization in time of an eternal conflict between the love of God and the inertia and evil of this world. The struggle is so fierce that God is seen risking his own life in order to overcome the inertia and change the evil into good.

Between Jesus and the world of his day there existed a state of tension which in the end was responsible for his execution. I believe you can find nothing in the mind of Jesus which corresponds to our modern faith in an automatic emergent evolution. The issue for him was never entirely certain. The possibility of human improvement depended upon the complete transformation of both individual and social life and that transformation was possible only as the will of man came into harmony with the will of God. But the will of man was for the most part contrary to the will of God. There was not only a lag in human society; there was also direct opposition to overcoming the lag. Jesus was aware of the resulting antithesis between the mind of God and the mind of man and of the terrific struggle which this involved between the forces of life and the forces of death. He lived his life as it was because he felt that he, too, must participate in the struggle of God with inertia, with apathy, and with evil. It was because Jesus identified his life with God's life that his enemies regarded him as an enemy of the human race.

This is an attitude which we moderns find difficult to understand and more difficult to appreciate. For a period of years we have been carried on a wave of unprecedented prosperity. Life on the whole has been thoroughly

comfortable if not particularly excellent. We accept it because we like it and we satisfy the divine craving for a better way by trying to acquire poise and refinement in our reactions to given situations. Realizing that we are a bit crude we make manners the goal of life. Now, manners are highly desirable but they have nothing to do with creative activity and much less with the religion of Jesus Christ. Jesus did not believe in this world nor did he accept it. He believed in the complete transformation of this world by bringing to bear upon it a revolutionary scale of values derived from another world—the world in which his Father lived and wrought.

The attempt to find one's values in dealing with given situations means in the last analysis accepting the status quo, and such acceptance leads straight to stagnation and decay. The status quo does not provide resources adequate to the transformation of the world as it is. Only those can turn the world upside down who will subject the status quo to the criticism that is made possible by a scale of values which is neither derived from the status quo nor dependent upon it.

A third relevant fact was Jesus' awareness that the way of deliverance was narrowly conditioned. He knew that, given the world of his day, the possibility of achievement was small. Jesus saw life as it was and was aware that the sheer facts of life greatly limited the probability of success. He knew the power of the ecclesiastical system, the power of the social system, and thus he knew that the gate was narrow and the way straight for those who would find life. Yet Jesus' very effectiveness was due in part to this realistic and tragic sense of the limitations of human life.

In the United States we have formed the habit of thinking of deliverance as relatively easy. We are blinded to reality by our conviction that the gate is wide and the way broad. This insufficient realization of the conditions which have to be fulfilled for deliverance is probably the greatest obstacle to our ever achieving it. We have acquired an immunity to the tragic aspects of life and hence are incapable of interpreting their meaning or responding to their appeal.

Once one has become aware of this tragic sense of life he never can escape from it again. It will haunt him to the end of his days, but he will have his reward in knowing that only those who are acutely sensitive to life's limitations are competent to qualify as guides for the way of deliverance.

In the presence of this tragic sense of life's limitations many of the contemporary expressions of Christianity seem very thin indeed. We know to what extent the gate has been narrowed by our industrial order and the way straightened by our sectarian preoccupations. Does anyone suppose that enthusiasm for personality or interest in understanding ourselves will be sufficient to carry us through such a gate or along such a way?

The amazing thing about Jesus was that in spite of the tension between himself and contemporary society he believed that God was love. That was

the basis of his ethic. He proved by his life that reverence for personality is the condition of creative activity in this world. Not reverence for personality because of what it is, but because of what it is capable of becoming. Jesus made men and women children of God by treating them as if they were already God's children. His doing this was conditioned, however, by the attitude of others toward him. His relations were not determined by indiscriminate sentimentality. Reverence for personality was available for all, but could be expressed only toward those who in some measure were responsive to such an attitude.

Reverence for personality, as expressed in the life of Jesus, is probably the most revolutionary single idea that the mind of man has yet conceived. Though men have had the opportunity to apply it to life for nearly two thousand years, scarcely a beginning has yet been made; there are vast areas of life in which its implications are not only not understood, but where its validity is entirely denied.

I realize that my description of these relevant facts is much too brief and that there are many other relevant facts which anyone will find who is interested in approaching the life of Jesus as a whole, Jesus living and teaching, Jesus put to death by his own church and nation, and Jesus Christ risen from the dead as the dramatization in time of the life of God.

But the facts which I have suggested are sufficient to illustrate the need for two things: first, the need of our making a more earnest and sustained effort to put our intellectual house into some kind of order, to give a more reasoned statement of the faith that is in us—in other words, to acquire a more adequate theology; and second, the need of developing a theory of society based on the ethic of Jesus. These are the two things we must do if we are to have an alternative theory of life. Neither can be done satisfactorily without the other. Each represents a partial but essential and supplementary reaction to life.

As I understand it, there are very few groups in this country at the present time who are working along either of these lines. I wish to say a word about the second one—the need for a theory of society based on the ethic of Jesus. For years this Student Movement has been a good iconoclast. But there comes a time when smashing idols is not enough. An alternative is required. Men who have been groping insist on choosing some other way of life.

I believe it is the duty of this Student Movement to stimulate individuals and groups here and there to begin working at an alternative theory of society. I do not mean to suggest for a moment that there is such a thing as a Christian theory of society. There never will be a perfect blue print to which we can all agree, but I do believe that if one is a leader of this movement it is his bounden duty to begin to work out for himself a theory of society based on the ethic of Jesus, and to incite and help others to work out theories for

themselves. Sooner or later a group of men will form in this country who will work out an intelligible practicable alternative to the present form of society in the United States—just as Ramsay Macdonald has done for Great Britain.

If Christians do not do this, where will we be fifty years from now? Look at Russia and Italy. In each country the old forms of society were unworthy of further toleration. Sorel wrote a theory of society based on violence: Lenin and Mussolini as young men read *The Critique of Violence*. That was the only available alternative. The time for action had come. What had the Christian groups in these countries been doing? Nothing. They had been accepting the status quo. They had no alternative theory of life to offer. They had not been writing about the cross as Sorel had been writing about violence, and they merited the contempt of those who turned from Jesus to Marx and Sorel.

If we should happen to continue as a Movement primarily interested in ourselves, as a Movement of open-minded people with no alternative theory of life to offer, it is as certain as the sun rises in the morning that the day will come when a young pagan economist will appear in this country whose theory of society will literally sweep through the colleges winning the allegiance of hundreds of the ablest students and leaving our open-minded friends blinking on the side of the road.

Who will propose the alternative theory of society? Will it be men who believe in violence or men who, accepting the life of Jesus Christ as a dramatization of the life of God, take the relevant facts in his life as their point of departure and work out a theory alternative to that of the capitalistic system?

THE MEANING OF THE FEDERATION

THE spiritual task confronting the Christian community is not one which can be achieved by organizational adjustments. It is a task the achievement of which depends upon the minds and spirits of individual men and women and upon the collective action which they make possible. The challenge of this civilization is a tremendous challenge to the soul of man. It is man who is on trial. It is man who is being asked whether he can measure up to the spiritual and ethical requirements of the civilization he has created, whether there is still a possibility of his exercising control over the social mechanism he has invented or whether the latter has already got so completely beyond his control that man himself has been reduced to the role of a pawn in the hands of his own creation.

But the soul of man does not grow in a vacuum. It grows only by its work and prayer, by its response to the mind and spirit of God and by its craftsmanship in dealing with the materials which life supplies it.

As men and women try to deal effectively with the spiritual crisis which modern civilization has produced, inevitably they will tend to group themselves into fellowships and movements in order that the maximum amount of their common intellectual and spiritual resources may be brought to bear upon the situation. Movements of this kind have been forming for a number of years.

I should like you to think of the World's Student Christian Federation as such a movement, and I wish to examine with you the type of contribution which we have a right to expect from this Federation. Organizational discussions are usually dry and wearisome and one of the most attractive features about the Federation is that its organizational element is reduced to a minimum. Though in certain of its manifestations the Federation is an organization—in its essence it is not an organization at all. It is rather a dream, a vision, an act of faith. It is a gesture to the modern world; a gesture by which as yet the modern world has not been very much impressed but which has a profound spiritual significance for its cultural, ethical and religious destiny. The Federation may be thought of as a small, rough and tentative model, but yet a model of the glorious cathedral which some day will provide a house of prayer for all mankind.

In order to understand the present meaning and task of the Federation one must recall its origin and history. The Federation was founded in 1895 as a result of the enthusiasm and determination of a small group of Christian workers among students the leader of whom was John R. Mott. This group,

representing student movements in Germany, the Scandinavian countries, Great Britain and the United States, met at Vadstena, Sweden, to organize the Federation. During the first quarter of a century of its existence the Federation had a phenomenal growth. At the end of that period some twenty-three national movements were affiliated with it, including a student membership of approximately three hundred thousand. Of the national movements one-third were student departments of national Y.M.C.A's or Y.W.C.A's while two-thirds were autonomous organizations. Though in its early days the Federation had been exclusively Protestant by the end of this first chapter of its history it had begun to acquire a distinctive inter-confessional character and had established intimate relations with several Orthodox student movements and also with a number of Roman Catholic groups.

The outburst of life and creative energy which was responsible for this amazingly rapid development had its sources in the evangelical movement of the latter half of the nineteenth century. The personality and teaching of Dwight L. Moody was perhaps the most decisive influence which prepared the way for the creation of a world student Christian movement. It was Moody and his doctrine of "the will of God" which gave the necessary impetus and which supplied Wishard and Mott with their sense of mission to the rest of the world.

If the ultimate religious sources are to be traced to Mr. Moody and Northfield, the organizing genius, the personal authority, and the will towards unity which a task of this kind required were supplied by Dr. Mott. It is a very impressive thing to remember that a quarter of a century before the establishment of a League of Nations a man at a desk in New York sat brooding over a map of the world and laying plans for a world league of Christian students. It was Dr. Mott's statesmanship that planned the Federation, but the execution of his plans required far more than the drafting of blue prints. They required the presence of the architect where the buildings were being erected. And since the buildings were going up on every continent, it meant that Dr. Mott's presence was required in every part of the world. It was through his continuous world tours that Dr. Mott's capacity for leadership found its typical and most powerful expression. The Federation was in a very special sense the creation of his personal presence and authority. Under Dr. Mott's general secretaryship and chairmanship the structure of a world community of Christian students was erected. The lines were laid down for communication between national groups. The channels were dug through which ideas and creative experiences could flow from one continent to another. This is the great heritage that our generation has received. We deserve no credit for it; it has been handed on to us.

But the task that confronts us is one even more difficult than that which confronted the founders of the Federation. They have provided us with the framework of a world society; it is for us to determine the quality of life

which will characterize that society. They have provided us with a form; it is for us to determine the content. They have provided us with a medium of expression; it is for us to determine the message. Has the Federation a message for the modern world? Have we as members of the Federation any word of life for our generation?

It is too early to give a final answer to these questions. If an answer is ever given it will not be the kind of answer that lends itself to a brief written statement, but the kind of answer that is provided by the impact of one kind of life upon another. Some of us believe that an answer of this latter kind can be given. We are staking our lives on that hypothesis and we ask you to join with us in helping to determine what the answer shall be.

The Federation has certain characteristics which make it uniquely qualified to serve as one of the agencies through which the spiritual and ethical needs of modern society can be met. The full significance of its international character is not yet appreciated by many even of its own members. There was a time when the Federation served as a sort of clearing-house between national movements. This was perhaps the only role which was open to it at one stage of its development. However, that stage is now definitely passed. The Federation continues to be a clearing-house but it is rapidly becoming much more than that. It is growing into a world community whose life and fellowship is essentially super-national.

It is imperative that this development should take place. The great moral and religious issues of our day are no longer national issues. They are not issues which can be settled *within* the frontiers of any one nation-state or continent-state. The forces which have created the spiritual and ethical crisis of contemporary civilization are all international forces. Everyone of us is exposed to the pulverizing impact of ideas and economic influences which originate in far distant quarters of the globe. The modern German youth comes more completely under the influence of Lindsay of Denver or Ford of Detroit than the American youth of the nineties came under the influence of the tradition of Lincoln.

Any effective forward move in the realm of the mind or the spirit can be expected only from men who are working in close collaboration with nationals of other countries on problems common to their respective countries. For example, we in America cannot hope to meet the situation in this country unless we are working hand in glove with Europeans on questions common to our North Atlantic civilization. The most pressing questions which are demanding our attention in the United States are not those which are either peculiar to the United States or which have their roots exclusively in the soil of this continent. They are questions created and posed by a civilization much more extensive than America. As such they cannot be adequately dealt with in their peculiarly American setting, or by persons who view them from a purely American point of view. Some of these questions can be dealt with

adequately only as they are seen in their setting as problems peculiar to a North Atlantic civilization and when studied by persons drawn from all of the countries bordering on the shores of the North Atlantic. The same could be said of other problems which are peculiar to the Pacific area.

When confronted with a situation of this kind it becomes obvious why the Christian community in the western world seems so helpless in face of the march of civilization. Protestantism has reached a stage in its history where either it must recover a sense of Christendom or perish. The American Protestant community is perhaps weakest at this point. Because of our denominational missions we have a keen interest in other continents, even including Europe, as a field for the spread of our particular form of Christianity. But there is an amazing absence of a sense of a world community of Christians of which we form an integral part as one among equals. Where are the churches that are producing leaders possessed with a passion for the ideal of the Church Universal; leaders whose intellectual power and spiritual insight make them competent to serve not as statesmen of one denomination but of the whole church of Christ; leaders, for example, capable of meeting with the leaders of the church in Western Europe to plan and carry through a strategy for the Christian forces around the North Atlantic? I repeat that the Christian community cannot expect to make any impression on this civilization; it cannot expect even to survive as a significant force in modern society unless it operates on the plane on which the decisive forces of our age are operating. The maker of a washing machine in the Mississippi basin is operating on a trans-Atlantic scale. Is it too much to ask of the American Christian community that in addition to the continuation of its missionary enterprise it should learn to think and act in terms of Christendom and in the interests of Christendom rather than in the interests of some national church? I have the impression that, with all of our modern inventions for speeding up transportation, the way is longer from Union Theological Seminary³ of New York to any theological college on the European continent than it was from Oxford to Prague five hundred years ago. Yet it was the interflow of life and ideas between Balliol College and the University of Prague in the fifteenth century that produced John Huss and the movement which bears his name. Might we not expect equally vital and life transforming movements in our time if the walls which have separated the national Christian communities could be broken down and if the leaders of these communities could begin to collaborate in giving expression to their faith and in discovering its ethical implications? The economic and financial leaders of our generation are operating as members of an international commercial community. But the civilization which they are creating will bear few traces of the mind or spirit of Jesus Christ unless a generation of Chris-

³ I mention Union Seminary because I regard it as the Seminary most sensitive to currents of thought from other parts of the world.

tian leaders appears competent to deal with the problems posed by that civilization; in other words, leaders capable of acting on the scale of that civilization; leaders who can think and act in the name of Christendom.

Men and women of this type will probably not appear by chance. We must resolutely set ourselves to the task of fitting individuals for such a role. And this constitutes the primary task of the Federation. The Federation must serve as a means of preparing students to think of the Church in these terms; it must serve as an experimental laboratory in which students can begin to work out the technique of cooperation between the national sections of the Christian community.

The world stands in tremendous need of persons who possess the catholic mind and spirit. The Federation must be the kind of fellowship which produces catholicity of outlook. By catholicity I do not mean indiscriminate inclusiveness. On the contrary catholicity contains an element of real exclusiveness, but it is an exclusiveness which takes its quality from Christ himself. The gospel narratives of Christ's life reveal that he had some very clear-cut ideas of what ought to be rejected and what ought to be accepted, and yet he had what I would describe as a very catholic mind. Perhaps the best way to make plain what I mean is to suggest that you compare his mind with some of the dominant mind-sets in the United States at the moment. Compare it for example with the "anti" type of mind, or with the legalistic type of mind, or with the naturalistic humanistic type of mind. All of these are the contraries of what I mean by the catholic mind. The catholic mind has as its point of reference God as it knows him in Jesus Christ, but it also carries in its heart the hopes and sorrows of the whole world, or rather of as much of the world as comes within its ken.

If the Federation is to fit itself to achieve even partially the perfectly stupendous task which it is called upon to undertake its policy will have to be overhauled and its emphasis on certain points will have to be strengthened. Three of these points deserve mention. First of all the national movements in the Protestant world will need to do a lot more thinking about what they mean by inter-confessionalism and about the extent to which they are going to put their theories into practice. In strictly Protestant movements surprisingly little progress has been made since the Nyborg meeting of the General Committee³ in experimenting with cooperation between Protestant and Catholic groups on the local campus.

Then we must make sure that in the whole life of the Federation there is an insistence on the equal importance of theory and practice. In some parts of the world one finds intellectualism in the ascendancy, and in other parts of the world activism. Either one of these emphases is dangerous when it underestimates the value of the other. Both are essential to the development

³ It was at the Nyborg meeting of the General Committee in 1926 that the Federation officially committed itself to an interconfessional policy.

of an authentic religious life. In America we are weakest on the intellectual side. We must make it our business to hammer out the meaning of our faith in order that we may be able to contribute more helpfully to the thinking of other movements and also in order that we may have an adequate reason ourselves for the faith that is in us.

But the most important point which I wish to mention is the need for an increase in the interflow of life between different national movements. All that I have been trying to say about the present world situation makes this imperative. We should not be content with occasional visitors or pilgrimages to this country, but we should prepare ourselves as a movement to take a more aggressive and significant part in the life of the Federation in other lands.

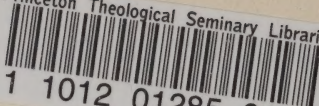
Perhaps, as I have been speaking, the word Federation has conveyed to you the idea of a world's headquarters in Geneva or some movement existing outside of the United States in which you are being asked to take a part. As a matter of fact the Federation does not exist apart from the members of the national movements which are bound together by it. In a very real sense *you* are the Federation. The Federation does not exist in this country apart from *you*. This means that you have a great responsibility.

The Federation is a very precious and a very fragile thing. As an ideal it is still so far ahead of what the average man can comprehend that its continued existence cannot be taken for granted. It will only continue to exist, it will only grow into our ideal for it as we embody that ideal in our lives and make it our business to forward its aims.

To a terrifying extent we Americans hold in our hands the fate of the coming years. We are the young giants of the new technical age. We are responsible for building this particular type of civilization. We are also responsible for the fact that our power is so great that we are forcing the pace for all the nations in the western world. They must conform to us or go under. Can we remain content that America's impact on the rest of the world should be so largely composed of Fords, movies, jazz and tourists?

Our task is as gigantic as modern civilization. It is nothing less than the task of seeing to it that this tremendous economic out-thrust from the United States to the rest of the world is supplemented or paralleled by another kind of out-thrust—an out-thrust rooted in the mind and spirit of Jesus Christ—an out-thrust of ethical concern and spiritual interest—an out-thrust which on the one hand represents a determination that no nation however weak shall suffer injustice as a result of our commercial invasion, and on the other hand represents a desire to exchange intellectual and spiritual values as well as to find a market for our goods. That is our task. It is a task much too big for us as individuals or for us as a movement. It will require the use of every ounce of intelligence that we may possess. And it is only in God that we dare go forth to begin our work.

Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries



1 1012 01285 0105

BR 526 .M56 1929
Miller, Francis Pickens,
1895-1978.
Americanism and Christianit

